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DE RUEHKO #1626/01 1650938
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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5056
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 3901
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 2661
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2078
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 2357
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 6147
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 9898
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RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIISS/USFJ PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TOKYO 001626

SIPDIS

P FOR MAREN BROOKS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/12/2018

TAGS: PREL XE CH RS IR AS JA

SUBJECT: U/S BURNS MEETS WITH JAPAN'S DEPUTY FOREIGN
MINISTER

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)
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¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Japan believes care must be taken to avoid pushing China too hard on the Tibet issue, Deputy Foreign Minister Kenichiro Sasae told visiting Under Secretary for Political Affairs Bill Burns June 9, and suggested that a statement made on the subject by the G-8 Foreign Ministers accentuate the positive (opening of dialogue with the Dalai Lama) rather than focus solely on the negative. China's military buildup is also a concern to Japan, and Sasae suggested the possibility of closer consultations to coordinate. In the wider region, Sasae termed the proposed Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism (NEAPSM) "a long shot" and said that although there is hesitation at the political level to launching a mechanism at this time, the Japanese are willing to discuss principles. Sasae touched upon Japan's concerns about the rising influence of Russia in the Far East and also asked about Iran. In both cases, he again suggested it would be worthwhile to have closer consultations at higher levels to coordinate our responses to these issues. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) DFM Sasae hosted a one-hour bilateral meeting with U/S Burns in Tokyo June 9. Sasae was accompanied by Principal Senior Foreign Policy Coordinator Takehiro Funakoshi, First North America Division Director Kanji Yamanouchi, and First North America Division Deputy Director Takeomi Yamamoto. Deputy Chief of Mission Joe Donovan, EAP-J Director-designate Danny Russel, and Embassy notetaker also attended.

CHINA

¶3. (C) The G-8 countries need to be careful about how to proceed on the subject of Tibet, Sasae said. He believes that nationalism is rising in China, and after the Olympics -- successful or not -- this will be even more true. The younger generation is growing proud of China and is behind the government one hundred percent on Tibet. Although China is not a democracy, the government must nevertheless be mindful of public sentiment. Sasae believes care must be taken not to further provoke this growing nationalism on Tibet by being too critical of China's policy. Accordingly,

the G-8 Foreign Ministers, while expressing concern, should also clearly note the positive steps the Chinese are taking, such as resuming talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives, who say they appreciate the dialogue, even if substance is not yet being discussed.

¶4. (C) The Chinese, continued Sasae, are very concerned about what the G-8 Foreign Ministers will say about Tibet, or about whether they plan to form a contact group to address the subject, and have been demarching Tokyo hinting that Hu Jintao will not come to the Hokkaido summit if this is true. The Japanese, he said, have been encouraging the Chinese to clearly explain their intentions concerning the resumption of dialogue, telling them that as G-8 president, Japan will be able to convince the others of China's position only if it is very clear and transparent.

¶5. (C) U/S Burns replied that he understands Sasae's concerns, and noted that the President, while directly addressing our concerns on Tibet, has also been careful to always steer the parties toward a dialogue. Accordingly, we will be sensitive to the need for the Foreign Ministers to strike a balance.

¶6. (C) With regard to the recent earthquake, Sasae said that while tragic, the Chinese also realize that it has helped divert attention away from Tibet. He believes the central government and the army have responded well to the disaster, thus bolstering their standing, while attempting to focus any blame on local officials and governments. Sasae was

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concerned about reports of possible damage to Chinese nuclear facilities and asked U/S Burns to share any information we might have on this.

¶7. (C) Over the medium to long term, China's military buildup continues to be a concern to Japan, said Sasae. He noted the initiation of a U.S.-PRC dialogue to address this and said Japan will resume its own security dialogue with China in July. Japan would like to see the Europeans continue to observe the arms embargo and is worried they will resume arms sales if they perceive improvements in the human rights situation. For Japan, this is a matter of national security, not human rights. Russia, he continued, also thinks arms sales to China are "no big deal." Sasae and Burns agreed on the need for continued dialogue to discuss China's military buildup, the role the Russians and Europeans are playing in this, and the effect of the recent elections in Taiwan and the need to help develop confidence building measures across the Strait.

ASIA

¶8. (C) The Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism (NEAPSM) initiative is a "long shot", Sasae asserted. Recognizing that "we need to sort this out sooner or later," he said that while there is hesitation at the political level to kicking off a formal structure, Tokyo is willing to discuss principles at this point, thus leaving the U.S. "a clear way out."

¶9. (C) The fact that Secretary Rice is going to Singapore is a very important positive step, said Sasae, as is the recent appointment of a U.S. Ambassador to ASEAN. He expressed a desire to work closely with the U.S. and Singapore to work on an APEC strategy. Sasae also mentioned the visit to Japan of Australian Prime Minister Rudd, predicting that his new, more liberal government will want to make drastic suggestions about reforming Asian architecture. Predicting that the Australians will "give us a lot of homework", Sasae said he believes it would be useful to have in depth consultations with the U.S. on this prior to the end of the year and the end of the current administration.

RUSSIA

¶10. (C) Japan perceives that Russia is reasserting itself in the east, said Sasae. Problems with European relationships, the need to compete with China, and a desire to attract Japanese investment are all motivating Moscow to seek to play a more active role in Asia. Japan must be careful about this and develop a strategy to engage Russia in a constructive way. Recognizing that there are some tensions with the Russians over G-8 issues, Sasae urged caution to avoid exacerbating the relationship.

IRAN

¶11. (C) It does not appear the Iranians will give up their nuclear program anytime soon, said Sasae. In addition, Tehran's wider involvement in the region, including in Lebanon, is very troubling. Javier Solana will go to Tehran shortly, but no one really expects a breakthrough. Sasae asked how the U.S. plans to proceed if the Iranians continue to move forward with their nuclear program. He said that increasing pressure may be necessary, but that ultimately there has to be some kind of dialogue. He noted that Japan has an ongoing relationship with Iran, particularly as it relates to the importation of oil, and that Tokyo would be concerned by any sanctions that might somehow impede its

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supply of oil. He said the Iranians are very frustrated with the Japanese and call them the "sons of the United States." The Japanese, for their part, try to tell the Iranians that they must overcome their "image problem" if they want to be taken seriously by the rest of the international community.

¶12. (C) U/S Burns replied that Iran is a serious, long-term problem and that Japan is correct to be concerned about the rising pattern of dangerous Iranian behavior in Lebanon, Iraq, and Afghanistan - as well as its nuclear ambitions. The United States recognizes that Iran is a regional power, but has deep concerns about how that power is being used. When Solana goes to Tehran, he will be prepared to address the proposal put forth by the Iranians, but will keep the focus on the EU-3 plus 3 package. The United States remains fully committed to trying to solve this impasse through diplomacy.

¶13. (U) Under Secretary Burns has cleared this message.
SCHIEFFER